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LETTER DATED 3 DECEMBER 1999 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to paragraph 6 of Security Council resolution 1271 (1999) of 22 October 1999 in which the Council welcomed my proposal to despatch a small multidisciplinary mission to Bangui to examine, with the Government of the Central African Republic, the conditions for the maintenance of the United Nations presence after the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) on 15 February 2000, in accordance with the recommendations contained in my reports of 30 May and 7 October 1999. By the terms of the same paragraph, I was requested to inform the Council as soon as possible concerning my detailed proposals in that regard.

In response to that request, a multidisciplinary mission visited Bangui from 15 to 19 November and filed its report. The main observations and recommendations are outlined in the following paragraphs.

The new Governments and President Patassé expressed their gratitude for the significant contributions made by the United Nations towards the restoration and consolidation of peace in the Central African Republic. However, they asked the mission to convey to me and to the Security Council their sentiment that the mandate of MINURCA should have been extended until the end of December 2000, even at a reduced military strength of two companies. This, in their view, would have enabled them to address the outstanding internal security challenges and the looming subregional threats and to mobilize the necessary means to continue the military, economic and social reforms they had embarked upon.

With respect to paragraph 5 of resolution 1271 (1999), relating to the organization by the Secretary-General of a special meeting to solicit funds to finance security-related reforms, the Government appealed for the meeting to be convened as soon as possible and for it also to be utilized to mobilize resources for urgent socio-economic peace-building programmes. They also requested the Secretariat to facilitate contacts with Member States that could possibly provide bilateral military assistance, particularly as it pertained to the training of new recruits.

Notwithstanding the sentiment expressed above, the discussions on the nature and structure of the continued presence of the United Nations following the withdrawal of MINURCA on 15 February 2000 were frank and fruitful. The

members of the mission were impressed by the professionalism and sense of purpose of the new team assembled by Prime Minister Dologuélé. After several meetings with the Prime Minister and a small group of his Ministers and a meeting with President Patassé, the Government agreed on the establishment of a post-MINURCA presence, whose principal mission and functions are outlined below.

The primary mission of this presence would be to support the Government's efforts to consolidate peace and national reconciliation, strengthen democratic institutions, and facilitate the mobilization of international political support and resources for national reconstruction and economic recovery.

More specifically, this presence would:

(a) Assist national efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and mechanisms for fostering reconciliation and dialogue, including the reinforcement of the Comité de suivi et d'arbitrage;

(b) Provide good offices, upon request, by the Government;

(c) Follow the political and security situation in the country;

(d) Contribute to the strengthening of national capacities for the promotion and protection of human rights, and follow the human rights situation in the country;

(e) Follow security-related reforms to be implemented by the Government in cooperation with bilateral donors, including the restructuring of the armed forces and demobilization and reintegration programmes;

(f) Follow the implementation of the reforms of the national police and continue to assist with the training programmes initiated by MINURCA;

(g) Support the efforts of the Resident Coordinator and those of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, in promoting an integrated approach in the development and implementation of post-conflict peace-building programmes aimed at national reconstruction, economic recovery, poverty alleviation and good governance;

(h) Facilitate the mobilization of international political support and resources for the security-related reforms and for socio-economic programmes.

To carry out the above functions, I propose to establish a United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA). This Office, whose duration will initially be for one year, will be headed by a Representative of the Secretary-General at the D-2 level. As I indicated in paragraph 59 of my last report on MINURCA to the Council (S/1999/1038), I intend to include in the new Office a small number of military and civilian police advisers to follow up on security-related reforms and to assist in the implementation of the training programmes for the national police which were initiated by MINURCA.

In drawing up the budget for BONUCA, I also intend to include provisions that would enable the Office to make modest contributions towards the development and implementation of some of the post-conflict peace-building functions under its purview, including those related to disarmament and the consolidation of the rule of law as well as to other peace-consolidation activities initiated by the United Nations country team.

In order to achieve a seamless transition from peacekeeping to post-conflict peace-building, every effort will be made to ensure that BONUCA is operational on 15 February 2000. In this regard, and in order to cut down on costs, some of the logistical and communications assets of MINURCA will be transferred to the new Office.

I should be grateful if you would bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN